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ABSTRACT

There are a number of approaches to the provision of services in the early childhood education field, one of which involves collaboration between organizations and individuals. This paper explores the challenges of collaboration as a strategy to expand and enrich early childhood services. Philosophical challenges involve: (1) facing the problem of assigning blame for the appalling conditions faced by many children in the United States; (2) sharing power in collaborative ventures; (3) determining which collaborators are effective providers of service to low-income families; (4) understanding children's development; and (5) determining the goals of collaborative programs. These challenges are discussed in terms of the history of the Head Start program. Pedagogical challenges of collaboration concern curriculum development, the role of parents in the teaching process, and assessment of children's learning. Collaborative programs are challenged by the acquisition and distribution of funding and the process of addressing inequalities that result from differentially distributed resources. Challenges relating to program structure and operation involve the accountability of programs to several funding and regulating agencies. Other issues considered in this document include the development of collaborative programs at the national level and alternatives to collaborative programs. A list of 35 references is provided. (BC)

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The Challenges of Collaboration:

A Human Services Issue for the '90's

Prepared for the AEL/Kentucky Department of Education Transition Symposium
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Challenges for Consideration by Collaboration Partners

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The Challenges of Collaboration: A Human Services Issue for the 90's

As the United States emerges from the decade of the '80's, it is clear that diverse segments of the community are paying increased attention to the value of comprehensive early intervention as a cost-effective strategy to address a range of social problems. Clear statements of support have emerged from the private sector (e.g., Committee for Economic Development, 1987 and 1991), from the nation's governors (e.g., Gnezda & Smith, 1989) from the current administration (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, 1991), from elementary school principals (e.g., National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1990), from state education policy makers (e.g., National Association State Boards of Education, 1989); from social scientists (e.g., Schorr, 1988), and from the Head Start community (e.g., National Head Start Association, 1990).

While agreement now seems to exist on the importance of early intervention, there still is no explicitly stated national policy to provide the direction and cohesion that such a strongly emerging consensus demands. This lack of clearly stated vision is confounded by the varied roots from which the early childhood field derives (e.g., Steiner, 1981). Our roots can be found from such disparate sources as the settlement house movement, early nursery school initiatives, the federal government's "crisis" responses to the Depression and World War II, and the back-to-basics emphasis. Consequently, within the early childhood field, there are several approaches to the provision of services, each with a different philosophical and historical base. However, building on the axiom that living organisms seek to derive order from chaos, what may be emerging is an attempt by early intervention advocates to seek their own consensus on their collective initiatives. One approach currently in vogue to meld together interest groups is collaboration defined by Kagan et al. (1991) as "...efforts to unite organizations and people to achieve common goals that could not be accomplished

by any single organization alone." (p. 5). Bruner (1991 noted that collaboration is only means a means to an end, and should result in improved services to children and families while reducing their risks.

For example, Head Start, with its perceived track record of success and its increasing financial resources, seems to be attracting a number of potential collaborators. Further, the Head Start community has been encouraged by its funding source, the Administration for Children Youth and Families (e.g., The US Department of Health and Human Services, 1989) to collaborate with other human service providers. As noted by Bush (1989), in a paper prepared for ACYF, what constitutes collaboration may vary widely across Head Start Programs. However, a shared theme appears to be a notion that Head Start Programs should match human and financial resources with other funding streams and/or agencies so as to secure extended services (e.g., a longer child day) and/or enrich resources for families (e.g., participation in JOBS training). Potential collaborators include: public schools and other LEA's; city, county and state department of social services and health; broad-based human service agencies; and specialized programs (e.g., United Cerebral Palsy Association).

Given our profession's history of responding quickly and compassionately to human needs, it is not surprising that many early childhood programs have embarked on a search for collaborative ventures, or at the least, have been responsive to overtures from other community groups. More of our families are experiencing difficult and complex life experiences, and are struggling to exist in a milieu of substance abuse, unemployment and damaged support systems. This especially is true of our younger single mothers, who appear to represent a growing percentage of our families. In our centers, larger number of our children are stretching our resources and skills, either because they seem to be unable to exercise internal control on their behavior, or because they exhibit a

non-responsiveness to our best efforts. Our initial impulse is that such families and children could be helped by our linking with other community resources, especially if such collaborations resulted in more specialized family services, extended classroom days, or an enhanced financial capability to attract and retain qualified staff in all early childhood programs. Advocates recognize the validity of Bruner's (1991) statement that some children's and families' problems cannot be addressed by the resources of only one agency. Further, as Kagan, et al. (1991) noted, business' effective use of collaboration and our own appreciation for the validity of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective have provided educational motivation to collaborate. And, as Blank (1985) reminds us, it is critical for early childhood advocates to engage themselves with all groups serving preschool children to assure that programs meet our standards of quality and appropriateness.

However, as Moore (1989) discovered in a collaboration survey done for the National Head Start Directors Association, the Head Start community is experiencing a sense of frustration and concern about the emphasis on collaboration as a end in itself. An examination of the survey's responses shows that programs administrators feel that working with other human service providers has always been a Head Start trademark. However, the collaborative push of the late '80's and beyond represents a departure from earlier initiatives, in part because it occurs during the "best of times" (i.e., renewed faith in the value of early intervention and a growth period for Head Start) and the "worst of times" (i.e., diminishing resources for many other human service programs paralleled by their increased interest in Head Start and our expanded resources).

While impossible to test systematically, it is conceivable that this ambivalence can be found throughout the entire early childhood community. Consequently, it may be important to take a reflective look at the collaboration

process. The purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges presented by collaboration as a strategy to expand and enrich early childhood services. For policy makers, such a discussion may serve to both underscore the complexity of collaboration, and to explain the seeming resistance to it on the part of the early childhood community. For program operators, a listing of the challenges can assist in analyzing each collaborative opportunity for its strengths and areas of potential conflict, prior to participating in new ventures. In a paper on transitioning children to public schools, Kagan (1990a) identified challenges in philosophy, pedagogy, resources and structure. The concepts are useful for this discussion as well.

THE CHALLENGE OF PHILOSOPHY

Whether clearly articulated or not, every human service program is based upon a vision of how society operates, how decisions are made and how human growth and development occurs and is enhanced. The philosophical base of Head Start may differ from that of its potential collaborators in five ways, and those differences have implications for the potential "fit" between programs.

*Whose "Fault" Is It?

Persons committed to social betterment often wish to assign blame for appalling conditions which exist in our society. While simplistic and (hence comforting) as way of analyzing social problems, who or what is blamed also has implications for what solutions are adopted for resolving those problems. For example, as the mixed school and life successes (by whatever measure) of our low-income children are reviewed, one approach is to blame the children and families themselves. Popularized by Ryan (1971), the "blaming the victim" analysis contends that if persons truly wanted to succeed, they would take advantage of the many opportunities available to them to acquire the skills and knowledge which are believed to be the precursors of school and life successes.

Children would come to school properly fed and clothed, would bring a healthy respect for school authority figures, and would show diligence in completing all tasks. Parents would participate in the activities offered by this schools. Failure to demonstrate these behaviors could be a result of family and child laziness, genetic inferiority, low motivation, few abilities, or other person-centered values.

Others view the mixed success rate as a failure of the very system designed to alleviate poverty. Welfare programs are perceived to encourage those very behaviors that they are supposed to remediate, by virtue of the dependency they engender in families. Institutions such as schools appear to utilize both subtle and overt racism in their selection processes and in testing procedures. Rather than build upon the successes of early intervention, schools seem designed to ameliorate all positive learning. Consequently, as described by the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, John McDonald (U.S. Department of Education, 1990), schools need to be made ready for our children, rather than children being made ready for the schools.

How this challenge is resolved is an important determinant of a program's goals, service delivery design and definition of the appropriate client. For example, our curriculum emphasis may be on children's acquisition of those skills and behaviors which assure success within the institutions with whom they will interact. Or the development of generic problem solving skills and creative responses to institutional barriers be a more important goal. Of importance here, however, is that programs with different approaches to the issue of "fault" may find the establish of a linkages to be problematic.

***Who Should Hold Power?**

Many early childhood programs are founded on the principle of empowerment, where each person's individuality and cultural dignity is respected and accepted.

An important goal may be to provide the knowledge, skills and synthesizing experiences to embolden parents and children to make sound decisions about their own lives, including a change in parenting strategies. By extension, we assume they then will positively impact upon and change the institutions which serve them. Our implementation of empowerment begins with shared input and decision-making on all program operation variables, including hiring and firing of staff.

Potential collaborators may not share our commitment to a broad definition of empowerment. It may be that legal constraints, authorizing legislation and/or contractual arrangements with other actors in the system (e.g., unions) have diminished the areas in which power can be shared. Other collaborators may focus solely on one form of empowerment, such as economic self-sufficiency, but may be funded by legislation and policy which limits the alternatives for reaching such a goal.

As an example, the issue of power-sharing becomes real when a Head Start Policy Committee endeavors to be involved in the hiring of staff for a new collaborative center, and the program partner states that it cannot permit such involvement to happen, since their regulations and policies do not allow for such input. Similar conflicts can arise when such traditional Head Start decisions as determining selection criteria, personnel policy updates and budget planning are discussed with our potential partners.

***Who Are The Most Effective Providers of Service for Low-Income Children and Families?**

For some early childhood programs, a critical component is their insistence that members of the community to be served must be an integral part of the program's staff. Their knowledge of the children's roots, their community commitment, and their enthusiasm could become the foundation for training

experiences which would focus on expanding their job-related knowledge and skills. The Child Development Associate (CDA) Program is a sound examples of that trend. However, our colleagues in other programs may be vested in the concept of professionalism as tied to formalized and proscribed educational experiences, culminating in a degree from a institution of higher education. Often these requirements are legislatively proscribed. At best, these credentials may be necessary but not sufficient requirements for employment in some early childhood programs, because this formal training may not lead to knowledge of and empathy for the communities served by those programs. This rigidity of credentials has been reinforced and solidified by the human service labor unions and professional organizations. In the early childhood profession, this challenge is complicated by the reality that appropriate higher education training programs are few, since elementary education teacher preparation programs generally are not designed to prepare persons to work effectively with children ages 0-5 in a variety of settings.

The point of conflict between potential partners can occur when job descriptions are discussed, particularly those positions in the education and social service field. Especially difficult may be disagreements on what credentials are most desirable for work with low-income children and families. For example, public school districts may insist on a B.S.- or B.A.-degreed teacher, while a Head Start Program may prefer a community resident who has a CDA credential. Or one human service agency may want social service leadership to be provided by a B.S. or MSW Social Worker, whereas another program may feel that the most effective service to low-income families could be delivered by a former Head Start parent who has received a series of in-service trainings, and has demonstrated competence.

*How Do Young Children Grow and Develop?

As a reflection of our disparate history, the early childhood field offers several competing options for explaining the development of young children, as described in elegant detail elsewhere (e.g., Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). Development may be viewed metaphorically as the growth of a flower, as exemplified by the maturationist approach to child development. Those adhering to the flower analog see children as unfolding through a predetermined timetable, so that the children themselves become responsible for initiating and controlling their own learning experiences. The teacher's role is to provide a setting which facilitates that child-initiated behavior, much as a gardener provides nutrients for flowers when necessary. At the other end of the spectrum, those who advocate for a behaviorist view of learning perceive young children as the proverbial blank slates, upon whom can be imposed any manner of knowledge or skill, provided that overt teaching strategies are employed in arranging the learning experience. Hence the teacher's role is to direct the children's entire learning process, including arranging the classroom, choosing the activities, designing the daily schedule, and selecting reinforcements.

A third view on children's learning, the developmental approach, perceives young children as bringing to any learning situation a set of basic reflexes sharpened and expanded by environmental interactions initiated both by them and by others. Paramount to children's growth are opportunities to explore their surroundings in concrete and individualistic ways, and to solve problems through repeated trials, reassessment of conclusions, and elaboration of experiences. The role of the teacher is to provide these opportunities by creating a milieu that allows for both child and teacher-initiated experiences, and for a mix of individual, small, and large group experiences.

Out of developmental theory has come NAEYC's well-defined developmentally appropriate approach to early childhood education (Bredekamp, 1987), including recommendations on curriculum and assessment. Perhaps because of its thoroughness of explication and its widespread publicity, the developmentally appropriate approach has moved into the realm of gospel within our field. However it is critical that collaborators go beyond a facile agreement that each endorses developmentally appropriate programming. As Jones (1991) notes, it easy to agree on commonly accepted wisdom, only to discover that our definitions are vastly different. This discussion especially is important in an era where measurable school success is being discussed at the national level, and where that which is most easily measured are skills and qualities which seem to lend themselves to enumeration. Questions such as, "How many words can she recognize in the spring as compared to last fall?", and "Has his knowledge of math facts expanded from addition by 2's, through addition by 10's?" can be seized upon as the measure a program's success. As the entire educare field must respond to increased pressure for accountability in constrained fiscal times, it is conceivable that a position of learning could be adopted that appears to facilitate evidence that those so-called measurable behaviors can be quickly taught.

This also is the time for early childhood program to confront what may be a contradiction in our own views on child development. We pride ourselves in having adopted the developmentally appropriate approach to programming. But we need to examine our own beliefs, observe carefully in our classrooms, look closely at our lesson plans, and dialog with our parents about what is meant when we say that preparing our children for school is a goal. Does that translate into measurable behaviors that are linked to school success (e.g., being able to "read"; knowing math and other "facts"; standing in line quietly; raising one's

hand; waiting for a turn; sitting attentively for periods of time; doing worksheets; and listening attentively to an adult)? These behaviors may not necessarily be characteristics or immediate by-products of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Yet, because such behaviors appear to be linked to school success, these qualities may be important to communities and groups whose access to society is perceived by them to have been limited and thwarted. Education alone may seems to be the only route to success and economic self-sufficiency is available to low-income and minority families. Indeed, as Epps (1991) remarks, such pressure for more formal instructional strategies and emphasis on basic skills may be being felt by kindergarten teachers of all SES groups, as they point to pressure from parents as a factor in curriculum decision making. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe our responsibility to confront and change that perception. What is important is that we explore this issue before we move outward to collaborate with others - and in the process, discover that our own house is built on sand!

***What Should the Goal(s) of the Program Be?**

Once all the above challenges have been addressed, the resolution of this challenge may well fall into place. For example, depending on an assigning of blame for social conditions, a human service program may target the institutions themselves for change, or may strive to help its recipients to become successful within the current system. Similarly, if empowerment is broadly defined, a program goal may become the enhancing of both the number of participatory opportunities and the abilities of people to utilize those opportunities. If a behaviorist approach to child development is adopted, then a program's goal may be directed toward measurable and observable changes in a child's behavior. A developmentalist, however may be focusing on the provision of varied experiences through the use of multiple strategies, so that the goal is not child output but

implementation of the process.

Clearly, selection and prioritizing of the collaborators' goals must be a consensual process, accomplished prior to beginning any project. It is a reality that we occasionally do proceed with our joint ventures assuming that all parties have agreement on such "basics". We then discover that, because of some or all of the above differences, our goals are not only different, but perhaps mutually exclusive.

Much time has been spent on these philosophical challenges because, in some measure, they cause or contribute to the pedagogical, structural and resource challenges which follow. If the above challenges can be confronted, acknowledged, mediated or even resolved, then it is conceivable that the challenges described below can be addressed more readily.

II. THE CHALLENGE OF PEDAGOGY

The last two challenges of philosophy have direct bearing on the challenges of pedagogy, or the selection of strategies to meet our goals. Included in those items which must be addressed are the following challenges:

*What should our curriculum be?

If early childhood educators are consistent, they will have adopted a curriculum approach that derives from their philosophy on child development. While potential partners may agree that both subscribe to developmentally appropriate practices, it still is necessary for them to dialog about several issues, including the following:

*What are the goals each partner's curriculum? How does each "fit" with the other's mandates and positions on human growth and development?

*What are the roles of the teaching team members in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases?

*What are types of activities utilized to actualize the curriculum's goals?

*Are teacher-initiated activities the only valued experiences to be used? What is the role of child-initiated activities? What is the appropriate balance between the two?

*What are the techniques used in managing the children's learning experiences?

*What is the role of materials? What materials are considered appropriate or inappropriate?

*What is the relative value placed on child-child, child-material, and teacher-child interactions?

*What is the division of labor among team members?

There may be other variables which could be used for a comparison, but what is critical is a thorough discussion by potential partners prior to curriculum selection.

***What is the role of parents in the pedagogical process?**

Because early childhood programs often talk about the parents as their child's first teacher, it is important to discuss this challenge separately. Some programs believe that parents are equal partners in the dialog to analyze and choose a curriculum, and have multiple roles to play in its implementation and evaluation. Included in those roles would be volunteering in the center, access to the classroom, and multiple formal and informal opportunities to dialog about their child's progress. However, other programs may not be used to nor desire this complex laying of roles. A successful collaboration requires a negotiation of these differences.

*How do we assess the results of pedagogical efforts?

This challenge is linked with decisions about how children develop and what pedagogical strategies are adopted. One approach to assessment has focused on pre- and post-testing of children, or the comparison of children's standardized test scores on a norm-referenced tests. The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (1991) recently cautioned their Chapter 1 colleagues that, "...Dependence on standardized tests tend to drive programs in directions inconsistent with ...good early education practices. Test driven program programs are characterized by instruction in discrete skills, with material conversation, use of ability groups and little or no opportunity to engage in problem solving behavior" (p. 3). Potential collaborators need to explore alternative assessment options, such as observations of each child, parent information, and accomplishments of other preventative and remedial actions (e.g., immunizations; health screenings). The important work of Meisels (1991), where he recommended the use of several informational sources, may be especially valuable as a starting point for discussion.

Such an approach, however, may be counter to that trend which insists that children be "ready" for school by the year 2000 (US Department of Education 1991). In their discussions of that goal, the nation's governors continue to emphasize "appropriate" nationwide testing in content subjects, as well as school readiness assessments for young children. Another "worst of times" scenario is that an interest in early intervention could easily become test-driven, without an appreciation that such motivation could vitiate our best efforts. While a thorough discussion of the whole readiness issue can be found elsewhere (i.e., Katz, 1991), it is so important an issue that exploration of it must occur between potential partners.

III. THE CHALLENGE OF RESOURCES

As the various sectors of the early childhood community establish working relationships, the differential distribution of resources across programs, with the overlay of diverse funding cycles as well as reporting and spending requirements, must be confronted. Two of the specific challenges immediately are apparent.

*What resources are allowable from whom, and for what services?

Some funding mechanisms, such as Head Start funding, appear simple. With the introduction of the Program Management System, most programs receive their funding every month from HHS, so that cash flow is stable and predictable. While participation in the USDA Child Care Feeding Program adds another dimension of reporting and accounting, most Head Start Programs have enough years of experience in managing both these funding sources to successfully integrate them. While Head Start remains dependent on Congress and the President, the new five-year authorization, with its higher levels of appropriation, does give it some sense of stability and predictability.

Other human service partners may not bring the same degree of constancy to the table. Those programs which are federally funded yet require a state and/or local cash match are taxpayer - driven, since their existence and potential expansion depends on the passage of yearly state or local budgets. This reality can present challenges to other collaborators, as both attempt to mesh allowable expenditures, funding cycles, current and predicted cash flow. Nothing is more draining to good intentions than delayed paychecks, inability to predict when funds will arrive, and providing the community with explanations for yet another delay.

*What inequalities result when resources are differentially distributed?

For a variety of historical and policy reasons, persons in some early childhood programs who have comparable education and experience do not receive the same compensation as their counterparts in other early childhood arenas. Typically, public school early childhood teachers receive larger salaries and better fringe benefit packages than their colleagues in the rest of the field. Despite state and national legislative efforts to provide funds for compensation, inequities remain.

It is interesting to observe what happens when two differentially rewarding systems, previously separated, do come together. How does one explain the validity of a system designed so that one teacher makes $10,000 a year less than her colleague in a collaborative effort? Clearly, there is no acceptable explanation.

IV. THE CHALLENGES OF STRUCTURE AND PROGRAM OPERATION

These challenges initially seem to be most daunting and cumbersome to program operators, perhaps because they surface quickly in any discussion of collaboration with another program. It is not unusual for us to get so beset in solving operational challenges that we never recognize or discuss the other three challenges noted above. It is for this reason that comparisons of how we organize and deliver our programs are confronted last in this discussion. All the challenges can be summarized by asking the question below:

*Can Many Masters Be Served?

How a program organizes and delivers services is greatly impacted by its funders and regulators, since these sources provide programs with requirements, mandates and (occasionally) choices. Many programs already serve several masters, since they must comply with local and state day care

licensing regulations, USDA requirements, and Head Start Performance Standards. Consequently, adult-child ratios, amount of indoor and outdoor space per child, presence of safety and fire alert equipment, staff qualifications and food service become non-negotiable criteria. Imagine the complexity which now will ensue when a Head Start Program interacts with another program whose regulations include a State Education Plan, local school Board decisions, union contracts, and various Federal funding mandates - none of which offer the same "answers" on decisions about ratios, space and equipment! And yet, both programs propose to offer services to the same children and families. These inequities may continues to persist, particularly when state laws exempt school and/or church-based early childhood initiatives from the regulatory processes that impact programs sponsored by other groups.

Another example of the challenge of many masters occurs when a program attempts to utilize one or more of the day care funding sources available from a federal, state or county or city department of social services (including Head Start, Title XX, JOBS or Transitional Child Care, At-Risk Child Care and the CCD Block Grant monies) to extend and enrich the children's experiences. First, the weekly rates for child care differ amongst these sources, even if the exact same caregiving experiences would be provided. However, even if a program adopted a "best case" strategy and decided to tap only that program paying the highest weekly rate - presumably those linked to the infamous Market Rate - the program would discover that the 75% market rate paid may not adequately fund the additional hours. The dilemma is compounded if the social service funding sources insist on a "full day" of care (e.g., 40 hours/week) in order to reimburse a program at the complete allowable weekly rate, when the program needs the entire weekly

rate in order to add just 20 hours a week to a child's experience. The relatively high cost of providing comprehensive services - a probable cause of successful early childhood intervention - remains a daunting challenge to our field.

If this problem can be solved, two challenges remain. First, most early childhood programs' expenses are ongoing: staff must be available each day and all day, even if children are absent. However, if reimbursement is solely linked to attendance, expenses will quickly exceed income, even in the best-planned program. Second, a program's financial integrity depends on prompt resolution of financial obligation, including salaries. Yet funding from a variety of sources - linked to variables such as reporting, the source's cash flow and check writing policies - can lag weeks, even months behind program obligations. While these are solutions (e.g., an advance from one or more funding sources; a wavier of regulations; an available source of local funds; over-draft privileges at a bank; and donations to cover costs), all require yet more diligence and manipulation of systems by a program director. The goal of "seamless funding" may seem to be unreachable and esoteric under these conditions.

V. COLLABORATION REVISITED: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

After careful consideration of the above challenges, it is clear that collaboration as a strategy to maximize and extend early childhood services dictates careful thought. In conducting such an analysis, it may be important to re-frame the deliberation in different terms. Several possibilities are available.

First, now is the time for early childhood advocates to ask if the push for collaboration would ever have occurred if this county had developed a coherent and integral policy on behalf of children and families, with

linkages to a workable and adequately financed funding-steam. A glance at France's proactive approach to the provision of child care (Richardson & Marx, 1989) provides evidence that this can be done. The reality of the '90's, however, is that this country's users and implementers of children and family services are providing the leadership to bring together patchwork systems. Even as the various funding sources encourage such efforts, numerous barriers remain attached to funding streams, and varied program goals remain in place.

It may be propitious to re-examine our assumption that the impetus for collaboration should derive from the top down, or beginning at national level. While changes in funding and program policies and procedures are necessary to remove collaboration barriers, Bruner's (1991) cautions about such so-called first generation collaborations may be valid. This most common strategy, initiated from the top down and characterized by establishing linkages at the highest state or federal levels, has the positive result of bumping together people who otherwise may not meet. However, Bruner's analysis is that the more successful and long-lasting strategies are second-generation collaborations, where demonstration projects at the local level are supported by the top level or third-generation strategies, where local leaders serve as the charge agents to implement those ventures that are locally designed and implemented.

Consequently, it is critical that all advocates become committed to the building of coalitions at the local, state and national level, recognizing the presence of potential allies in the early childhood community with whom we should dialog about common interests. While a loosely formed national coalition must take great credit for the passage of the recent child care and Head Start legislation, such a proactive groups may not yet be in place

in all states, and most importantly, in local communities. For example, in your locale, have the center-based providers operated apart from the family day care providers, neither of whom interact with the Head Start Program or the public schools? Even within public school systems, we can find teachers and administrators who share our advocacy for developmentally appropriate curricula and assessment. The time is here for all sectors of the local early childhood community to seek consensus on issues, through our local NAEYC affiliate or some other vehicle. The parents of our children need to be active partners with us in this venture. We should advocate jointly for quality early intervention services with local and state governing bodies. No longer can each local early childhood group stand isolated from the exciting and exacting discussions within our own communities - discussions which will impact on the lives of the children and families we serve.

A Consensus on the Meaning of Collaboration

It is important the early childhood advocates come to agreement on a definition of collaboration, its components, and its place on the spectrum of available strategies for provision of services. The discussion may be helped by a realization that a key issue in collaboration, as so aptly identified by Kagan (1990a) in her discussion of transition, is one of continuity - of philosophy, pedagogy, resources and structure. Early childhood educators often refer to the deleterious effects of experiential discontinuity on our young children when they transition from Head Start to programs to public school. A case can be made that similar effects obtain when a collaborative effort requires consistent transitions between systems that are also marked by discontinuity. Kagan (1990a) also remarked on the need for a "shared vision", grounded in an acceptance that the critical

needs of our low-income young children and their families require us to work diligently on the creation of a "seamless system" of service delivery. For collaborators, such a shared vision also needs to be established. There are several insights which may be helpful for both policy makers and the Head Start community to develop that vision.

The early childhood community also needs to examine what it considers it to be its past and current efforts at collaboration, comparing them to a useful yardstick offered by Kagan and her colleagues (1991). They purpose that a hierarchy of relationship exists, beginning with the informal relations of cooperation, where autonomy is maintained and resources are not shared. Cooperation, where some resources are shared to implement a specific program, is a mid-level relationship. Collaboration is the most complex interaction, and results in separate organizations' developing a new structure that goes beyond intermittent or limited-issue contact. It is possible that by defining cooperative or coordinated ventures as collaborations, we have absolved ourselves from the need to explore more complex arrangements. If we adopt Kagan's analysis, it becomes clear that collaboration indeed <u>is</u> only one of several options for program interrelations. It may often not be the best "fit" when goals, resources and barriers are considered.

<u>A Riddle: When Is Your Early Childhood Program Not Your Early Childhood Program?</u>

When all analyses are done, perhaps the most important challenge is a variation on the old child's riddle: When is your program not your program? One answer to the riddle depends on our identifying those attributes that appear to be correlated with positive outcomes of early childhood programming; (e.g., developmentally appropriate curriculum, multileveled and

meaningful parent involvement; comprehensive services; linkages to the communities served) and then determining at what point we have diminished those attributes so that we no longer offer a child and family experience of which we are proud. While it may not be possible to draw a chart which depicts the break-even point for programs, the importance of this determination cannot be understated.

The second answer to the riddle will be even more elusive but no less important to determine. It is the extend to which collaboration impacts upon and substantively changes the culture which has developed in a program. Tom Peters (1989) is correct when he pronounces that large companies are doomed unless they adapt to the exigencies of the market place, particularly the opportunities posed by new technologies. However, Peters and others (e.g., Hickman & Silva, 1989) warn us about the dangers inherent in overrunning an established corporate culture while pursuing organizational change. In her seminal and fascinating work, JoAn Knight-Herron (1990) has begun to delineate the components of a child care culture by noting that it cherishes the contribution of women while valuing its few men, and that it appreciates differences, not homogeneity. It stresses the whole child and non-violent problem-solving. As such analyses continue, and as the early childhood community agrees that our culture is of value and to be preserved, we must decide if moving outward to interact with new players will reinforce or significantly modify our culture. Will the resulting alternatives be so extensive that, our program not be one about which we can speak with pride?

V. CONCLUSION

It is clear that both practitioners and policy makers also need to engage in a dialog to resolve, or at the least address these challenges. In our effort to employ collaboration as a strategy for meeting our agenda, are

we giving away those qualities which have caused our success? Do we reduce our level of comprehensive or developmental services, even for part of the day, in order to fund an extended day? Do we reduce the options for parent empowerment, so as to coexist with a partner who cannot or does not allow for parent decision-making? Do we establish joint ventures with systems that we and/or our families perceive as dysfunctional to our families' growth? While there may not be "one right answer" to these questions, it is imperative that they be asked.

The reader's current impressions to the contrary, it has not been this author's purpose to dismiss collaboration out of hand. Indeed, a strength of the early childhood movement has been its bringing together people with diverse backgrounds and lifestyles. Further, ensuring that Kagan's (1990b) emphasis on quality, equality, integrity of early childhood ventures could be enhanced through collaborative efforts. Rather, it is the purpose of the paper to provide a set of variables - of questions to be asked - by which every collaborative opportunity can be systematically analyzed. For the author concurs with Kagan et al. (1991) that collaboration is only one, "...instrument in the large tool box awaiting utilization as we rebuild America's system of services....to young children and families" (p. 21). By itself collaboration will not solve the need the public and private sectors to invest the resources necessary to develop economic and personal self-sufficiency for all our citizens. However, collaboration, if used wisely, could be a valuable asset for early childhood advocates' struggle to provide a better qualify of life for young children and their families.

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